

# Free-men Inslaved:

O R,

*Reasons humbly offered to the right Honorable, the Commons of England in Parliament assembled, for the taking off the Excise upon BEER, and ALE. [1643] see below*

First,



Because the way of raising Money by Excise, is contrary to the Fundamental Laws of this Land, and never known to be practised in this Kingdom, until these late years of distraction and confusion, it being alwayes thought in former Ages, by Free Parliaments, a more honorable and equal way of raising moneys for the supply of his Majesties great Charges and Necessities by way of Subsidies and Fifteens, which charged onely those of his Majesties Subjects who were most able, and had visible Estates; Whereas this Levy by Excise, doth principally burthen the poor, especially that intollerable impost of four shillings in the pound on Beer and Ale.

Secondly, Because in the first attempts to introduce the Excise 3 *Caroli*, it was adjudged by that Parliament a horrible Monster, that would devour Trade, and therefore rejected; And *deci no sexto Caroli*, in four Declarations, Votes, and Remonstrances, the Parliament then revived and approved of the former Judgement of Parliament against it. And in *Octob. 1642*. when it was but reported, the Parliament was about to impose Excise, the Parliament did then declare that those that reported it, should be brought to condign punishment. *O quantum mutatum ab illo!*

Thirdly, The Materials of Beer and Ale being of *English* growth, and that Commodity (next to Bread) the very stay and staff of the poor; it will be most for the Nations advantage and encouragement of *English* Manufacturies, to take off all Impost from Native Commodities, and lay (in case of necessity) the charge by way of Subsidy and Fifteens, whereby it will be born by the abler sort of this Kingdom.

Fourthly, It is most reasonable that no greater sum of money should be raised upon the people, then will answer his Majesties and the Kingdoms just Necessities; but in the collecting of this new Impost, one eighth part is wasted upon needless Officers; whereas the good old way by levying moneys by Subsidies and Fifteens, only known to our forefathers, brought in the whole into his Majesties Exchequer, at an inconsiderable expence, not exceeding two pence in the pound.

Fifthly, It will be esteemed an act of high grace and great favour (as well as of Justice) to the impoverished *Brewers* and *Viſtuallers*, and other poor distressed Tradesmen who have chiefly felt the weight of that insupportable burthen of Excise, for his Majesty and his two Houses of Parliament to put a period to that Grievance, especially now when the people are full of expectation of their just liberty and ease from their former burthens.

Sixthly, The continuance of this heavy imposition of Excise, will be dishonorable to the Parliament, in that they ease themselves, and the Gentry, and rich People of the Nation; and lay the burden on Corporations, and the meanest of his Majesties Subjects.

## *Reasons further shewing the inequality of the imposition of Excise upon Beer and Ale.*

First, Because by the pretended Laws of Excise, the *Brewer* is made the Collector thereof at his great charge and pains, for which he hath no recompence.

Secondly, Because the common *Brewers*, (whose Families are numerous, as also the poor *Viſtuallers*) payes Excise for that which is expended in their own Families; whereas all other house-keepers who brew for themselves, are Excise-free.

Thirdly, Because the *Viſtuallers* are much impoverished by this burthen of Excise, being unable to raise that great charge, dealing much with poor people, and restrained by former Laws from selling at higher Rates, whereby they are rendered insolvent, to the *Brewer*, both for Excise and Principal, it often happening that the *Brewer* payes Excise where he looſeth all.

Fourthly, Because the allowance of two barrells and half in twenty two and a half, for *Ale*; and three barrells and half in twenty three and a half for *Beer*, granted for Returns, *Lecadge*, filling, *Christmas-beer*, and other waſts and Accidents incident to the Trade of *Brewing*, are no way answerable to the great loss they receive thereby.

Fifthly, Because that by the pretended Laws of Excise the *Brewers* are to clear their Accounts weekly for the said duty, whereas they seldom receive the Excise of the *Viſtualler* until the *Ale* and *Beer* be retailed, and sometimes but once a year, which is an encrease of the *Brewers* dead stock one fifth part, and cannot be remedied by reason of the *Viſtuallers* inability to advance moneys.

Lastly, Because lately the Excise is encreased six pence per Barrell upon Beer and Ale more then formerly, there being no possibility for the *Brewer* or *Viſtualler* to advance it in any proportion in their smaller Retailing measures.

## *Reasons against the illegality in levying the Imposition called the Excise.*

First, Because the Commissioners and sub-Commissioners are both Judges and Parties, they having Poundage out of the very income of Excise, according to what they are pleased by their Officers to extort of the *Brewers*.

Secondly, The Commissioners and Sub Commissioners, are both Judges and Jurors, they judging both of the Law, and also of the fact, and that for their own advantage, denying us Tryals either by the Judges of the Land, or Jurors, which is our birth-right.

Thirdly, Because the *Gagers* and other Officers of Excise, have a Power at unseasonable times, by night, and by day, to enter into our houses, to our great disturbance, contrary to *Magna Charta*, which saith, *Every man's House is his Castle*.

Fourthly, Upon Levying of their fines by way of distress or imprisonment, we have been denied *Replevins*, and likewise our *Habeas Corpus*, and consequently the benefit of the Common Law due to free-born *Englishmen*.

*The Brewers of LONDON not obtaining the Priviledge of having their Petition read in Parliament, do humbly offer these Reasons to consideration, praying that such a way may be thought upon for the defraying the publike Charge of the Nation, as that every man according to his Estate and ability, may bear his equal and just proportion, and no more; That so your Goodness may be Universal, your Justice Impartial, and that the Cry of Oppression may be no longer heard in our Streets.*